

Do guests prefer Tech Savvy Rooms? A perspective from hotel guests

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ABSTRACT

More than ever before, technology today is having a substantial impact on business spheres, and the hotel industry is no exception. It has turned out to be a critical element with regards to guest satisfaction. The purpose of this study was dual: to understand the most common reasons for choosing a hotel to stay in and measure and document the guest satisfaction with the existing technologies offered in hotel guest rooms. A random sample of Indian travellers was taken into consideration for the study; a questionnaire was developed for hotel guests, generating a sample of 158 valid responses.

The results of the study revealed that Seamless unlimited Wi-Fi was the most important technology for both leisure and business travellers. The majority of respondents would prefer to experience new technologies in order to improve their experience.

Keywords: *guestroom technology, technological amenities, guest experience, in room technology*

INTRODUCTION

Technology has had a big impact on society all around and its importance has grown substantially during the past few decades. Keeping this view in mind, hotels need to follow the evolution of technology to attract guests and provide them with a unique experience. Some technology trends in industry are leading to great improvements and savings for the hospitality industry; while some are changing how hotel establishments plan their buildings, infrastructure, management structure and staffing requirements.

Technology already is an intrinsic and invaluable element of the total travel lifecycle, ranging from travellers using an assortment of devices to book hotels to connecting to Wi-Fi instantly upon arrival in the hotel.

It is extremely important for hotels to continue advancing in technology to enhance the guest experience. Outstanding hotel experiences are important not just to keep guests happy during their stay in the premises of the hotel, but also to influence their behaviour post-stay as well. Comments on social media are now the trend and are surely bound to rise, especially with the millennial travellers accounting for a greater share of travel activity.

Business guests and leisure travellers are on the constant look out for new experiences. As a matter of fact expectations of having access to the newest technology in hotels continue to increase. The growing level of technological acceptance by guests combined with the shorter life cycles of technology creates a major challenge for hotels. In the past, hotel guestrooms provided access to varied experiences with technology that potential hotel guests could not get in their homes a few years earlier. At the present time, this has changed completely wherein, in most cases, what guests have in their homes today is at times far more superior to anything that is available in hotel rooms (Horner, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to provide in-room technology that reflects what is on the market now and what people are currently experiencing. Hotel guests expect to have access to the internet seamlessly and without any

interruptions, leading hotels to invest in better, faster Wi-Fi infrastructure so that guests can conduct business and use their technology devices with ease during their stay.

In order to meet the rising demand of hotel guests, hotels today have incorporated modern technological trends in guestrooms such as Food tray trackers, Dash buttons, Video phones in rooms, In room interactive television, iPad, LCD Mirror television, Smart showers and Keyless room entry, to name a few.

The purpose of this study was:

1. To identify the main reasons for guests choosing a hotel to stay in.
2. To analyse the importance of technology with respect to guest experiences in hotels.
3. To ascertain whether the latest technologies in hotel guest experiences varies according to age group and purpose of travel.

Literature Review:

1. Ana carina freire margarido (2015) in her study mention that upmarket hotels operate in a very competitive market and therefore place a high amount of importance on emphasis providing quality service through the latest technological amenities. Of late hotel organisations are paying heed to the customers' desires in an effort to offer them a unique experience. Nevertheless, given the number of options available with respect to technologies in the market today, hoteliers have a very limited understanding of their guests' expectations and of which technological amenities will help achieve guest satisfaction. As technological items change rapidly over time, the study was carried out to analyse the impact of current technologies available as well as to assess the potential of the latest technologies on guest experience.

2. Chee Wah Peter Too (2010) in his research paper mentions the various types of technology and facility enhancement devices adopted by hoteliers for their guestrooms in order to meet the constantly increasing demand and expectation from the guests. The author also explores the technologies and devices that hotel operation heads use to influence business sustainability for daily operations. As a part of the corporate social responsibility, hotel owners are exploring the opportunities to increase certain activities through the use of modern technology to reduce damage to the environment by using energy

saving devices in their properties. This paper as also provides a better understanding on the technologies adopted by hoteliers that have a positive impact on the environment without compromising the service level they deliver.

3. Cihan Cobanoglu (2011) states that technology is a vital determinant with regards to satisfaction of hotel guests. Hotels often make use of technology as a value-added amenity to help promote a sense of uniqueness and enhance guest satisfaction. This study to measures the level of guest satisfaction with the existing technology-based amenities in hotels, and examines the scope of impact of these amenities on overall hotel guest satisfaction.

4. SoYeon Jung (2014) This paper mentions the importance of hotel operators recognise in-room technology trends and as an effect the impact of in-room technology on business performance. The study also determines that setting up particular in-room technologies that have a significant effect on enhancing the customer experience and increasing hotel revenue. The study also mentions the most commonly installed in-room technologies that hoteliers plan to install in the near future

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Age of the respondents

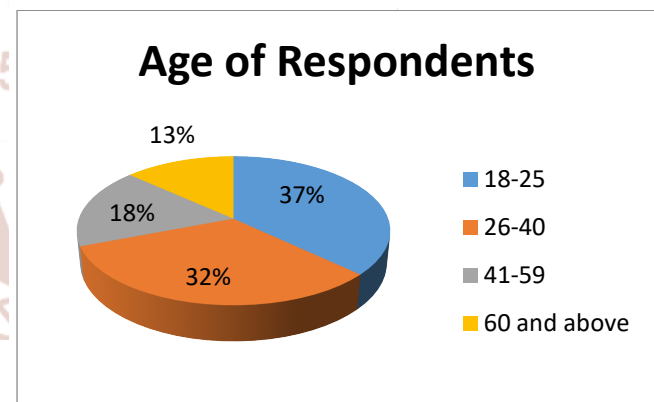


Figure 1

The above data is categorised by age of the respondents who travel. The data reflects that 37% of the respondents were between the age of 18-25 years, 32% respondents were between the age of 26-40 years. A few respondents, 18%, were between the age of 41-59 and only 13% were older than 60 years.

Gender of Respondents

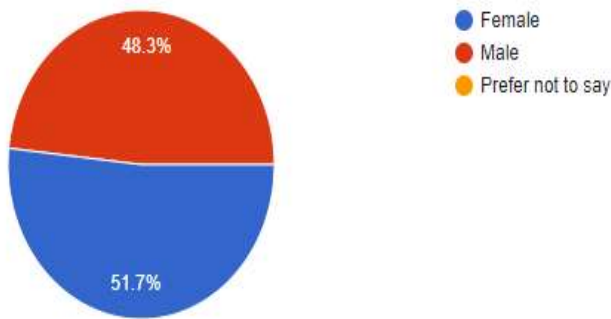


Figure 2

The questionnaire was distributed among 158 respondents out of which 51.7% were Female and 48.3% were Male.

Marital Status of Respondents

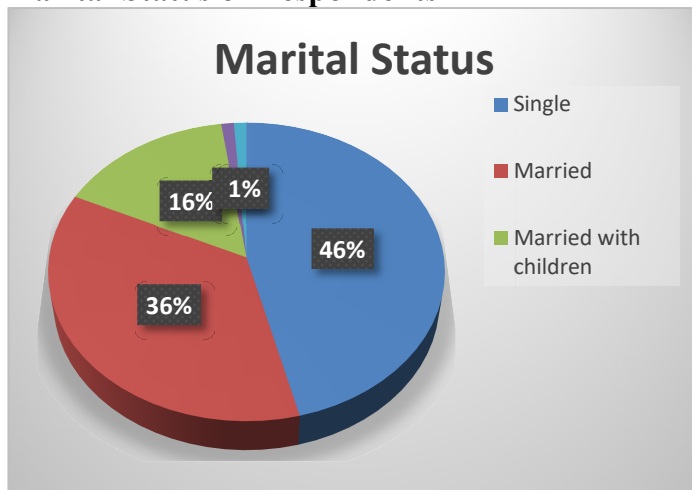


Figure 3

In terms of marital status, almost half of the respondents were single (46%), and 36% were married or were cohabitating. The remainder of the respondents were married with children, 16% and just 1% were in a relationship.

Educational qualification of Respondents

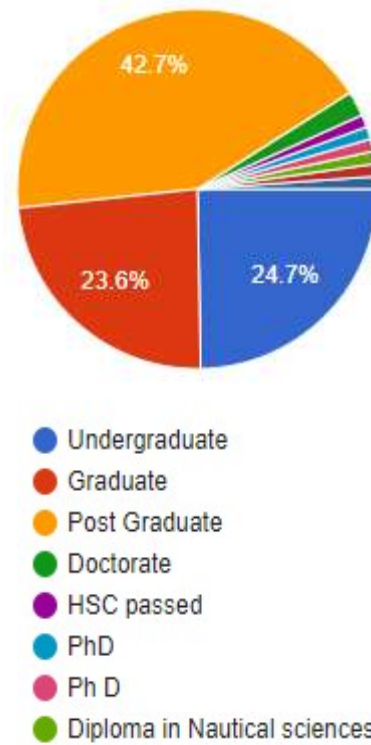


Figure 4

With respect to the Educational Qualification of the respondents who filled out the questionnaire, the results show that 42.7% were had Post Graduate Degree, while 24.7% were Under Graduates and 23.6% were Graduates. The remaining respondents were varied such as, Doctorates, Ph.D holders, and from the Nautical Sciences background to name a few.

Purpose of Travel

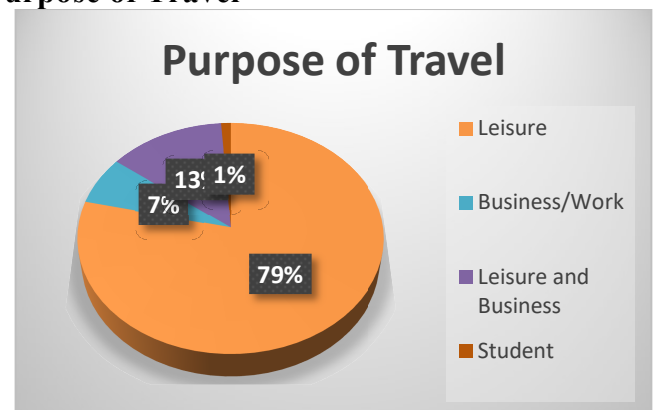


Figure 5

When examining the purpose of travel of the respondents', the vast majority of respondents 79% were leisure guests, while 13% were travelling for both, Business and Leisure. A small portion of the sample 7% were travelling for Business. Almost 1% of the respondents said they travelled as a Student.

Typically the most common reason for guests to choose a hotel would be the location of the property, but the data collected suggests that Location comes a close second, (47%), whereby making Technological Amenities prevailing in hotels (52%) the top choice of hotel guests. The price and quality of the hotel room (30%) and other guest room service and amenities (19%), and choosing a hotel on the basis of website reviews is 24%. Discount vouchers and Chosen by company is rated by 6% and 3% of hotel guests.

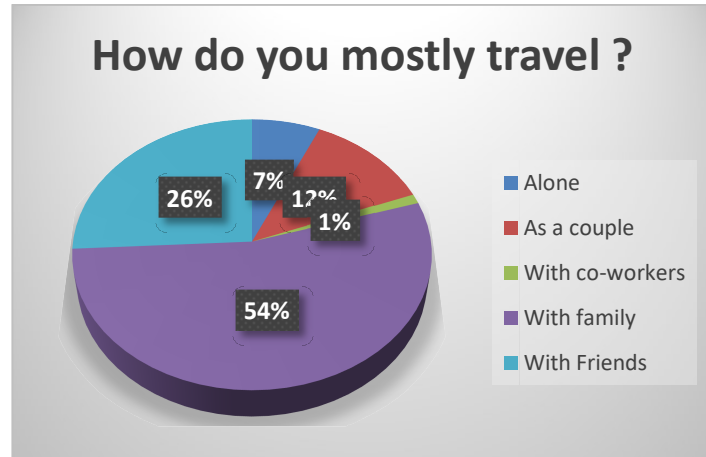


Figure 6

Another finding of this study indicates that almost 54% of respondents that stayed in hotels had travelled with Family. While 26% of the respondents travelled with Friends and 12% travelled as a couple. Just 7% travelled Alone and 1% with co-workers for the purpose of attending meetings or conferences.

Number of devices that a Hotel Guest travels with.

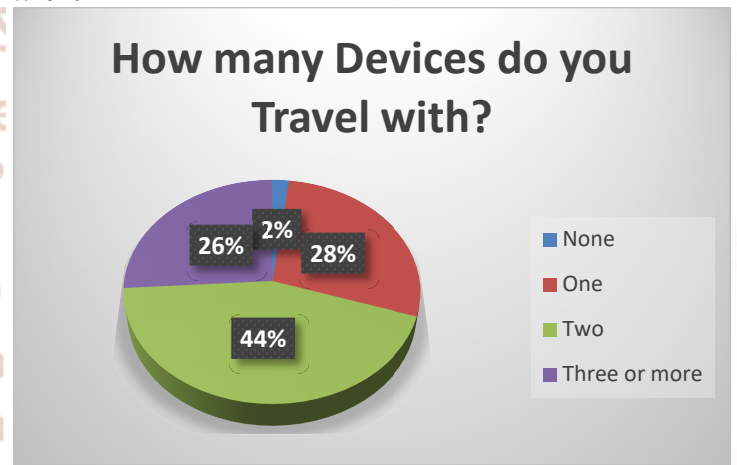


Figure 8

Apart from just travelling with their smartphones and laptops, more and more guests today travel with devices such as iPod, iPad, Tablets and other streaming devices. Of late many guests are bringing their own content when they stay in a hotel, which they can access through Smart Televisions in the guestrooms. The data collected states that 44% of hotel guests travel with at least two devices, 26% tend to travel with three or more devices whereas 28% with one device and a relatively low amount of hotel guests, 2% travel with no device.

Vital Reasons for choosing a hotel to stay in.



Figure 7

Guests acknowledgement of Hotel Technological Amenities

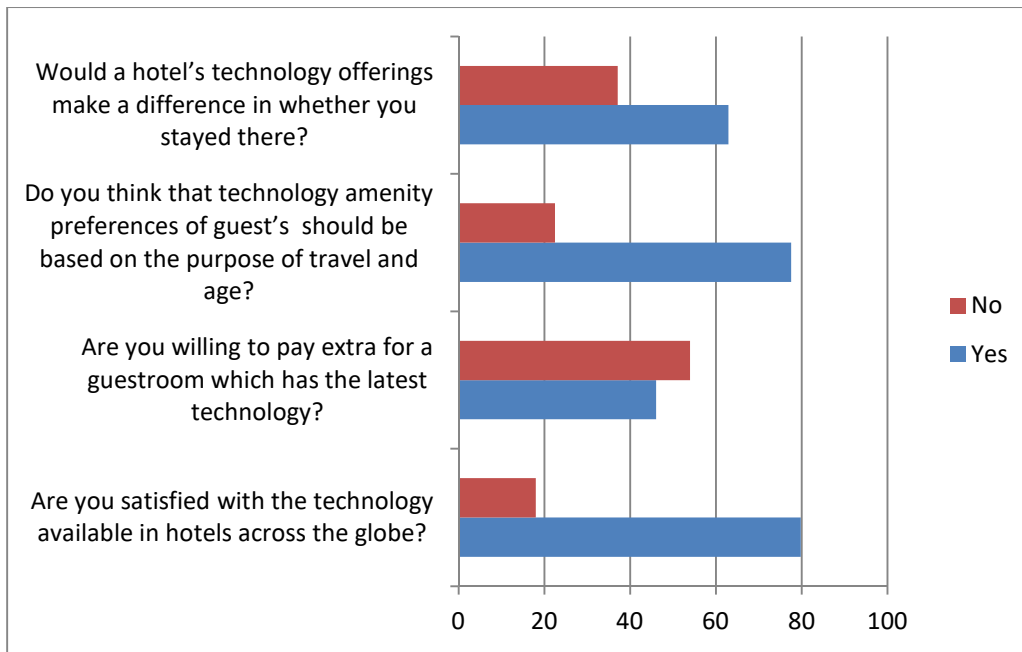
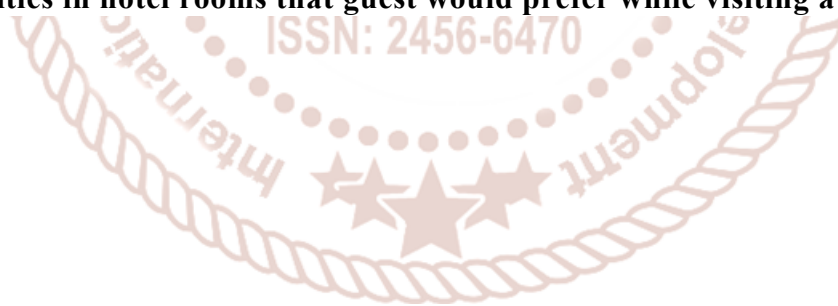


Figure 9

Data collected to understand the acknowledgement of hotel guest with respect to certain aspects of technology in hotel rooms, displayed the following results. 80% of of mentioned that they are satisfied with the various technologies available in hotels across the globe while 18% state that it could be better improved or newer technologies introduced. 46% guests say that they are willing to pay extra for a hotel room which provides them with the latest technology. 78% agree that technological amenity preferences of guests should be based on the purpose of travel and age of the potential traveller as compared to 22% who did not agree with the above. 63% of hotel guests mention that there would be a definite difference in the choice of hotel to reside in, depending upon the hotels technology offerings, while 37% state that technology offerings of a hotel would not make a difference while choosing a hotel to reside in.

Technological amenities in hotel rooms that guest would prefer while visiting a hotel.



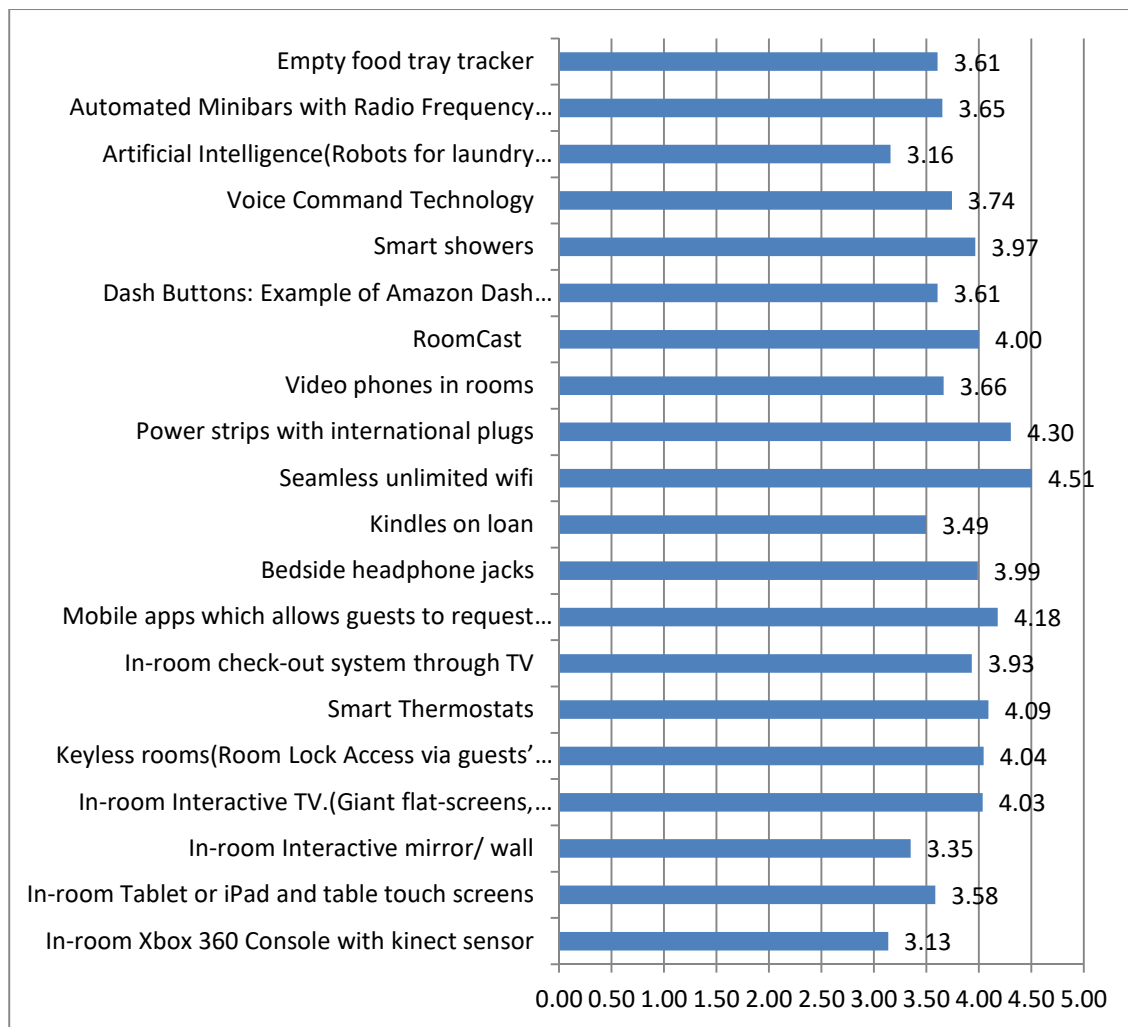


Figure 10

Respondents were asked to state their preference from a scale of 1 to 5 on the 20 listed technological amenities in hotel guest rooms that would enhance your stay. Likert's Scale was used for the rating whereby, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

Mentioned below is the list of latest Technological Amenities that help enhance the Guest their stay in a hotel.

| Sr. No | Technological amenity in Hotel Guest rooms |
|--------|---|
| 1 | In-room Xbox 360 Console with kinect sensor |
| 2 | In-room Tablet or iPad and table touch screens. |
| 3 | In-room Interactive mirror/ wall |
| 4 | In-room Interactive TV.(Giant flat-screens, HD, 3D and 4K TV) |
| 5 | Keyless rooms (Room Lock Access via guests' mobile phone) |
| 6 | Smart Thermostats (technology that will allow guests to adjust the temperature in their rooms with a smartphone, even if they aren't on the premises) |
| 7 | In-room check-out system through TV |
| 8 | Mobile apps which allows guests to request everything from fresh towels to a turndown service |
| 9 | Bedside headphone jacks |

| | |
|----|--|
| 10 | Kindles on loan |
| 11 | Seamless unlimited Wi-Fi |
| 12 | Power strips with international plugs |
| 13 | Video phones in rooms |
| 14 | Room Cast (a mobile streaming service for the hospitality industry from TeleAdapt) allows guests to watch their own content on the hotel TV from thousands of Cast-enabled apps, including Netflix, YouTube, HBO and Spotify |
| 15 | Dash Buttons: Example of Amazon Dash button. Push to order new toilette paper |
| 16 | Smart showers: Smart showers automatically control the temperature and power of your water with pre-set preferences. Shower stalls that turn the glass from clear to frosted with the touch of a button |
| 17 | Voice Command Technology (placed by the bedside console and equipped to understand voice commands) |
| 18 | Artificial Intelligence (Robots for laundry valet, newspaper delivery etc.) |
| 19 | Automated Minibars with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) |
| 20 | Empty food tray tracker |

The study revealed that Seamless Unlimited Wi-Fi (Internet access) was the most important technology for hotel travellers with the highest Mean of 4.51. This reflects that as most guests' today travel with multiple devices, having a high speed internet or Wi-Fi connection is vital. Power strips with international plugs (4.30) ranks a close second, and Mobile apps which allows guests to request everything from fresh towels to a turndown service (4.18) ranks third primarily due to the need for guests wanting to be empowered when they stay in hotels. Smart Thermostats (technology that will allow guests to adjust the temperature in their rooms with a smartphone, even if they aren't on the premises) has a Mean of 4.09 and ranks fourth in the technological amenities desired by hotel guests. Keyless rooms (Room Lock Access via guests' mobile phone) with a mean of 4.04 was also considered to be important.

Technological amenities that have been rated lower on the overall spectrum include In-room Xbox 360 Console with kinect sensor 3.13, Artificial Intelligence (Robots for laundry valet, newspaper delivery etc.) 3.16, In-room Interactive mirror/ wall is 3.35, Dash Buttons: Example of Amazon Dash button, 3.61, Empty food tray tracker 3.61, Automated Minibars with Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) rated at 3.65 Mean.

Conclusion

With technology progressing in such a fast pace, the key requirement for every hotel in enhancing the guest experience and increasing repeat business, is staying ahead of changes. The challenge here is in keeping up with the guest, who are already tech savvy and desire technology at every step of the way, especially while they travel to keep them connect with Business and acquaintances.

Incidentally, technology is being taken out of the hands of the hotelier and put into the hands of the guest allowing them greater control over their individual experience by also empowering them to make decisions that directly concern them during their stay.

The study also states that most of the travellers today who stay in hotels are millennials who travel with family for leisure purposes and who have a tendency to choose a hotel for the type and amount of Technological amenities it provides, irrespective if the amenity is charged or complimentary. Among all the Technological amenities provided to the hotel guest the most favoured is Seamless Unlimited Wi-Fi (Internet access), due to the number of devices they travel with and the need to have access to products and services at the touch of a button.

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